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ABSTRACT

One of education's most important goals should be to promote the lifetime love of reading. However, the standards initiative, the debate about creating a national curriculum, and the bashing of whole language efforts are among the high visibility trends that are causing teachers and administrators to focus on phonics, spelling, vocabulary, and other skills to the preclusion of more meaningful, interesting activities. For students to consider reading as a serious part of their lifestyles, they need exposure to fiction and nonfiction books, biographies, anthologies, "how-to" manuals, audio-books, computer software, magazines, newspapers, and other meaningful resources. Providing part of the school day for recreational reading is essential because demographic trends have resulted in unsupervised households. Teachers can shift from textbooks and follow-up activities to authentic material and student choice as a step towards developing the lifetime literacy habit. Teachers should demonstrate a variety of behaviors that represent lifetime literacy. Another invaluable strategy for encouraging the lifelong love of reading is to read aloud interesting stories every day. As teachers read aloud a variety of materials, they enrich students' lives with different types of text, including expository, narrative, descriptive, and poetic. Literacy educators have many opportunities to communicate the importance of their mission, which supports both proficiency in reading and a love of reading. (Contains 11 references and a figure illustrating a yearlong schedule that includes recreational reading.) (RS)

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Promoting Lifetime Literacy:

What Can Be More Basic?

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Promoting the lifetime love of reading should be one of our most important goals. Through pleasurable reading, children and adolescents have opportunities to apply skills to meaningful contexts, to build general-world and content-specific knowledge, to experience fluency with connected text, and, of course, to develop the lifetime reading habit. Our students, therefore, need opportunities in school and at home to enjoy "real" reading as a valued and worthwhile activity.

Regrettably, this basic right of our students is being jeopardized by a number of national trends in education. The standards initiatives, the debate about creating a national curriculum, and the bashing of whole language efforts are among the high-visibility trends that are causing teachers and administrators to focus on the kinds of learning outcomes that are more palatable to the media, boards of education, and parents. Such a limited perspective usually translates into phonics, spelling, vocabulary, and other skills dominating language arts instruction to the preclusion or deemphasis of more meaningful, interesting activities.

This narrow view of what is important devalues whole learning and treats it as a frill. Thus, reading for pleasure to develop the lifetime reading habit is not given equal status with basic skills instruction. Ironically, becoming a lifelong reader should be considered one of the most basic skills to be fostered because wide and varied reading increases the potential for an informed citizenry and for a better society. What can we do to promote and maintain this "big picture" perspective?

Providing "Real" Resources

For our students to consider reading as a serious part of their lifestyles, they need exposure to fiction and nonfiction books, biographies, anthologies, "how-to" manuals, audio-books, computer software, magazines, newspapers, and other meaningful resources. Children and teenagers also benefit from reading and responding to

authentic messages by means of e-mail and the Internet. A classroom library/resource center is therefore the nucleus for promoting the lifetime literacy habit.

Not surprisingly, teachers are in the best position to supplement their classroom centers so that the quality and quantity of materials are well-matched with their students' strengths, interests, and needs. Before ordering resources, however, teachers should become familiar with them. Securing sample copies, experiencing them firsthand, and discussing their value with students and colleagues are among the best approaches for making decisions about their appropriateness.

At times, busy teachers need other sources of support when selecting materials for their students. For example, a book selection aid, such as **More Kids' Favorite Books** (1995), may be helpful because it provides annotations of books for children. Another valuable aid is **More Teens' Favorite Books** (1996), which includes not only book annotations but also a collection of articles that promote reading for pleasure. These articles are entitled "The Reader's Bill of Rights," "A 'Fiver' of a Book," "Free-Choice Reading? Are You Kidding?", and "Encouraging the Lifetime Reading Habit." Also of use to busy educators are periodicals that include reviews of books for children and young adults. Among these ready references are **Language Arts, English Journal** (National Council of Teachers of English), **The Reading Teacher, Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy** (International Reading Association), **Booklist** (American Library Association), **Book Review Digest** (H.W. Wilson), and **School Library Journal** (R.R. Bowker).

Complementing these efforts is the school library/technology specialist, probably the most vital resource for helping determine the accessibility of materials for a community of learners. An experienced librarian is well-versed in children's or young adult literature and is able to provide teachers with pertinent suggestions for updating their classroom collections.

Needed: Time to Read

A well-stocked classroom library/resource center--about four to eight materials per student--sets the stage for immersing our literacy learners in real reading. Initially, children need to browse, sample, and select potentially interesting books. Then, these budding lifetime readers should be permitted to read their selections during school time.

Providing part of the school day for recreational reading is essential because demographic trends--a high divorce rate, an increase in homes with two working parents, and a rise in single parents who must work--have resulted in unsupervised households. Thus, many of our students leave school each afternoon and enter homes with no adult supervision. Rather than read for pleasure, they are more likely to watch television, play video games, engage in telephone conversations, or socialize with friends. These activities are certainly constructive when they are done in moderation; however, they tend to displace other important activities, such as reading interesting books, when they dominate our students' after-school hours. By building recreational reading time into the school day, we are demonstrating sensitivity to demographic trends and simultaneously sending a positive message that developing the lifetime reading habit is a major instructional goal.

Although we can fulfill this goal in a variety of ways, an ambitious approach is to organize pleasurable reading immersion across the curriculum during the entire school year. For example, the first five weeks of the first ten-week progress period could be designated for reading individually selected social studies materials. Students would come to their social studies class each day, choose books from the classroom library/resource center, and read them at their own comfortable pace. Although the books consist of social studies content, they might be unrelated to a curricular requirement, or they might support a social studies theme or unit, such as the American Civil War. Regardless of the structure used, students have opportunities to read for

pleasure every day for five weeks. Fortunately, this plan does not negate curricular standards because the social studies teacher has another thirty-five weeks to engage learners in instructional units, assessments, and other required activities. As the plan is extended to language arts, science, mathematics, and other content areas (see Figure 1), students have more opportunities to experience a diversity of materials, to enjoy wide and varied reading, and to continue this positive journey toward developing the reading habit.

Alternative Considerations for Using Time

Based on the constraints of a school, this comprehensive approach to lifetime literacy may be too ambitious. Sometimes, taking small steps is more feasible as teachers work toward the "big picture" perspective of instilling their community of learners with the lifelong love of reading.

One way of moving in this direction is for teachers to reflect on their weekly lesson plans to determine which activities are unnecessary. For example, an instructional unit concerning desert regions may focus on where the Navajo live and may highlight related textbook reading and follow-up exercises concerning vocabulary items, comprehension questions, and other skills. Probably, most of these follow-up exercises are a waste of time because they tend to evaluate rather than support students' efforts to become proficient readers. They also are learned more effectively and economically in the context of interesting, meaningful resources.

I therefore would suggest different instructional priorities that (1) motivate students to brainstorm key concepts concerning the land of the Navajo, (2) place learners' responses on a chalkboard semantic map, (3) guide children to ask prediction questions about the textbook chapter to be read, (4) give students time to read the chapter and to confirm or disconfirm their predictions, (5) encourage learners to make

more predictions during reading, (6) challenge children to add pertinent comments to the semantic map (with different colored chalk) as they gain new insights from the reading, (7) give students time to read and enjoy self-selected resources about the region in which the Navajo live, and (8) challenge learners once again to add new connections to the semantic map based on new information they read about in their own selections. Complementing these priorities is quality student talk that is nurtured through whole-class discussions, small-group interactions, and individual conferences.

Although this restructuring of a week's lesson plans is not exemplary, it is a step in the right direction. Specifically, teachers who use textbooks and follow-up exercises as dominant classroom methodologies are now including authentic material and student choice as part of the learning environment. This growth represents a realistic transition because it demonstrates respect for both the worth of the textbook and students' choice of material. It also supports interactive thinking and encourages ownership of learning. As teachers and their students experience success with this alternative use of time, they are more apt to continue these efforts and to experiment with other flexible approaches so that developing the lifetime literacy habit becomes a major part of the instructional program.

Teacher Demonstrations of Effective Reading/Thinking Behaviors

Lifelong readers are proficient consumers of text, and an important factor in developing the literacy habit is to observe successful readers. Because our students are continuously watching us, we have a moral imperative to demonstrate positive literacy behaviors that will shape or influence their learning. Teacher demonstrations represent one aspect of mediated learning that helps students to go beyond their current level of development to a more sophisticated, but reachable, level of growth (Sanacore 1997). Interestingly, as our students begin to make this important transition,

they are on their way to becoming independent readers and thinkers. How can we support this foundation for independent growth?

Since one of our major instructional goals is to promote the reading habit, we should demonstrate a variety of behaviors that represent lifetime literacy. Thus, during recreational reading, our students benefit from not only being immersed in meaningful resources, but also observing their teachers engaged in related activities. Recently, one of my graduate students indicated that when her sixth graders read for pleasure each day, she also enjoys fiction and nonfiction books as well as professional literature. Janet strongly believes that her passionate love of reading is an inspiration to her students.

Another way of inspiring positive literacy learning is to demonstrate the joy of browsing a variety of resources from the classroom library/resource center and the school library/media center. By exploring different materials and metacognitively thinking aloud about their personal value, we help children realize that experience with browsing and with reading for pleasure increases their chances of successfully matching books and periodicals with their individual interests and needs.

Fortunately, as children connect with the "right" materials, they experience natural contexts for expanding word knowledge. Rather than learn (and probably forget) vocabulary through isolated word lists, students are more likely to expand their repertoire of language when they have opportunities to observe and apply proficient use of language during natural immersion. Teachers are a vital part of this growth process, especially when they demonstrate how effective use of connected text can enrich vocabulary growth, enhance reading fluency, and improve reading comprehension. In supporting this instructional direction, teachers can share authentic literature with students while showing them how appropriate use of intonational patterns--pitch, stress, and juncture--reveals implied meanings; how sentences,

paragraphs, and longer passages support the meaning of new words and concepts; how longer selections may be interpreted without thorough awareness of all the words; how context serves as a support system for word structure and for other approaches to understanding new words independently; and how schemata (or prior knowledge) must interact with vocabulary to promote comprehension (Sanacore 1994, 1997).

Beyond demonstrating vocabulary growth through meaningful contexts, teachers should show students the value of other reading behaviors. For example, reading to solve authentic problems and using interactive strategies to understand different kinds of text are among the positive literacy habits that support children's efforts to become proficient lifetime readers. As literacy educators, we should accept the challenge of demonstrating these and other reading/thinking behaviors and of motivating students' emulation of these behaviors during real reading situations.

Reading Aloud

Another invaluable strategy for encouraging the lifelong love of reading is to read aloud interesting stories every day. Engaging in read alouds provides literacy learners with powerful opportunities for developing mental maps of successful reading. According to Trelease (1989), read alouds inform, assure, entertain, arouse curiosity, and inspire. All of these "experiences create or strengthen a positive attitude about reading, and attitude is the foundation stone upon which you build appetites" (p. 2).

Not surprisingly, when teachers read aloud interesting books, children are more apt to read them on their own during free time in the classroom (Martinez and Teale 1988). Daily read alouds that provide exposure to a variety of text, including narrative and expository, are especially beneficial to budding lifetime readers because

1. Children develop flexibility in reading diverse text structures.

2. Such diversity supports an expanded context for solving problems and thinking critically.
3. Early exposure to exposition nurtures a foundation for ease and facility with content area reading.
4. Children come realize that all types of reading materials can be functional, enjoyable, and challenging (Sanacore 1991, Sanacore and Wilsusen 1995).

These positive outcomes support a rationale for using instructional time to share a variety of exciting rersources with children and adolescents. The following suggestions, adapted from Atwell (1987) and Sanacore (1996), may be helpful for organizing effective read alouds of different genres:

- Teachers should select materials that they like and that they believe their students will like. Books, magazines, newspapers, and pamphlets are especially potent when they concern personal topics that stimulate listeners to think and respond interactively. Young children usually enjoy materials that help them learn more about themselves, grandparents, animals, insects, and other living things. Older students appreciate resources that trigger emotional responses, such as sorrow, distress, anger, passion, and sometimes laughter (Carter and Abrahamson 1991). As we select related fiction and nonfiction, however, we should not assume that our students are uninterested in other topics. We therefore need to take risks as we read aloud a variety of materials to a diverse population of learners.
- The chances of conducting a successful read aloud are increased when teachers practice reading the selection several times. Novice teachers and veteran educators who lack experience with these oral presentations can develop confidence by videotaping or taperecording their practice sessions and then reviewing them privately

or in the presence of colleagues who offer objective, constructive criticism.

- When teachers are ready, they should wait until their audience of listeners is ready, for example, gathered by the Author's Chair or seated and focused on the anticipated read aloud.
- Sometimes a read aloud is not successful because individuals do not listen attentively. Interactive listening is a vital part of the process, and teachers can stimulate this desired behavior by guiding students to make predictions from the title, illustrations, and front and back covers of the resource.
- During the oral presentation, listeners need opportunities to confirm or disconfirm their initial predictions and to make more predictions.
- Children and young adults are more apt to maintain their enthusiasm and attentiveness when teachers effectively use such suprasegmentals as pitch, stress, and juncture. Appropriate use of these intonational patterns supports listeners' understanding of and appreciation for moods in the selection.
- Students also gain important insights about the intent of the selection when teachers use nonverbal behavior (e.g., frowning) and sound effects (e.g., gasping).
- Although teachers are focused on varied strategies during the read aloud, they frequently should have eye contact with their community of learners.
- After the read aloud, students benefit from responding to inferential and critical-thinking questions. This enrichment follow-up challenges learners to grow beyond "literalness" and gives them opportunities to apply newly gained insights to personal problem-solving.

As teachers read aloud a variety of materials, they enrich students' lives with different types of text, including expository, narrative, descriptive, and poetic. This enrichment helps learners develop confidence and facility in responding to immediate challenges in literacy. More important, learners are supported in their journey toward

acquiring the lifetime love of literacy.

Advocating the Big Picture

As literacy educators, we are being challenged by recent trends that are negating or lessening our momentum to promote whole learning. These trends erroneously suggest that our schools are ineffective and that they should revert to a traditional curriculum that emphasizes skills. Ironically, incorporating skills into whole learning practices has always been a vital aspect of supporting lifetime literacy efforts.

From 1972 to the present, my graduate students and I have observed several thousand students successfully connect the semantic, syntactic, and graphophonic cueing systems with materials that are interesting and meaningful. These efforts have led to a number of positive outcomes, including students reading and writing with impressive understanding and fluency and learners immersing themselves in a wide variety of topics and subject matter. In most cases, children and adolescents have made admirable progress with their literacy learning.

Regrettably, these are not the kinds of big picture outcomes that are being embraced by the sensational media, politically oriented legislators, moderately informed parents, and local boards of education. Instead, these forces have reverted to reductionistic approaches that highlight the teaching of skills as dominant aspects of the instructional program. To a significant degree, we must accept the blame for this paradigm shift because we have not proactively reached out to these forces and have not consistently provided them with updated information concerning our successful literacy efforts.

The proverbial glass, however, is still half full. Fortunately, we have many opportunities to communicate the importance of our mission, which supports both proficiency in reading and a love of reading. Developing the lifetime reading habit must

be articulated as one of the most basic skills to be fostered, and as literacy educators, we are obligated to demonstrate our successful efforts in this direction. We can write brief articles in local newspapers, make presentations at board of education meetings, and share insights during PTSA get-togethers. These forums are useful for communicating the value of providing children and adolescents with real resources, with time to read, with positive literacy role models, with enriching read-alouds, and with other related activities. We also should embrace parents as dynamic partners in their children's literacy education. These and other efforts go a long way in nurturing a society that not only is able to read but also **wants** to read.

Figure 1

Ambitious Model of a Student's Yearlong Schedule That Includes Recreational Reading*

	First progress period		Second progress period		Third progress period		Fourth progress period	
1. Social studies	RR							
2. Language arts		RR						
3. Physical education			NRR					
4. Science				RR				
5. Mathematics					RR			
6. Lunch						NRR		
7. Health							RR	
8. Home and careers								RR

Note: Each box represents 5 weeks

RR: Recreational reading (blank means other instructional activities are occurring)

NRR: No recreational reading is included during physical education and lunch, since PE is offered twice a week and lunch is not an instructional period. These areas, however, are appropriately spaced so that no gap in recreational reading is longer than 5 weeks. Thus, the children experience reading in all 10-week progress periods.

*Adapted from Sanacore (1994)

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